



Office of the Mayor  
City of Columbus  
Ohio

## WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

### INTRODUCTION

The City of Columbus endeavors to provide a workplace for City employees, which is free from all forms of violence and the influence of violence. This policy recognizes that a workplace free from violence or the threat of violence is fundamental to the health and well-being of City employees. To promote a work environment free from violence, the City expects that all employees, at every level, will be treated with respect and dignity. This policy applies to all employees of the City of Columbus as well as volunteers and interns working under the direction of City employees.

### DEFINITIONS

<b>Workplace</b>	<b>Workplace</b> is any location, either permanent or temporary, where an employee performs any work-related duty. This includes but is not limited to, City owned buildings and surrounding perimeters including parking lots, field locations, and traveling to and from work assignments. A field location includes any location where an employee is performing their duties regardless of whether the location is owned by the City.
<b>Workplace Violence</b>	<b>Workplace Violence</b> is behavior consisting of, but not limited to, oral or written threats, harassment, intimidation, physical attack, or property damage, as well as criminal acts, e.g., homicide, domestic violence, sex acts, stalking, kidnapping, and assault.
<b>Physical Attack</b>	<b>Physical Attack</b> is any form of aggression resulting in physical attack with or without the use of a weapon or any aggressive act of hitting, kicking, pushing, biting, scratching, or any other such physical contact directed at a City employee by a customer, visitor, or co-worker.
<b>Threat</b>	<b>Threat</b> is an expression of present or future intent to cause physical or mental harm to another regardless of whether the party communicating the threat has the present ability to do harm.
<b>Harassment</b>	<b>Harassment</b> is any behavior or communication that is designed to induce fear. (Alternative definition: Harassment is bullying based on a legally protected class.)
<b>Bullying</b>	<b>Bullying</b> is repeated, unwanted, abusive, intimidating, demeaning, or other malicious action directed towards an employee or group that is unrelated to the City's legitimate business interests.
<b>Protection Order</b>	A <b>Protection Order</b> is any civil, temporary, or stalking protection order issued by any court of competent jurisdiction whether in or out of state. City employees who have been granted or are subject to a protection order are encouraged to provide a copy of the order to their department or division human resources or the Appointing Authority or designee. The information contained in the protection order will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and disclosed only on a need-to-know basis.

## **I. POLICY STATEMENT**

**The City of Columbus has no tolerance for physical attacks, threats, menacing and/or harassing behaviors in the workplace.** City employees found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and may also be personally subject to other civil and criminal penalties. All forms of violence, threats or intimidation directed at City employees by persons outside the City will be met with an immediate response, which may include civil and/or criminal action designed to protect the employee and prevent further instances of workplace violence. This policy and any related sanctions are deemed supplemental to the City's Central Work Rules, the Civil Service Commission Rules and Regulation, all applicable collective bargaining agreements, all applicable Memoranda of Understanding, and applicable State and Federal laws.

This policy also includes domestic abuse and domestic violence incidents that impact the workplace. Employees who are victims or potential victims of domestic violence are encouraged to contact EAP for confidential counseling and referrals, as well as inform your supervisor or departmental human resources.

### **A. Examples of Prohibited Conduct**

Specific examples of conduct that may be considered workplace violence prohibited under this policy include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Hitting, shoving, or other violent or threatening physical contact;
2. Direct or indirect threats to harm an individual or that individual's family, friends, associates, or property;
3. The intentional destruction, threat of destruction, or sabotage of property;
4. Making harassing or threatening telephone calls, or sending harassing or threatening letters, e-mails, or other forms of written or electronic communications;
5. Intimidating or attempting to coerce an employee to do wrongful acts, as defined by applicable law, administrative rule, policy or work rule that would affect the business interests of the City;
6. The willful, malicious, and repeated following or undue surveillance of another person, also known as "stalking," with intent to place the other person in reasonable fear for his or her safety;
7. Violation of a restraining or protective order; and/or
8. Unauthorized possession or inappropriate use of firearms, weapons or any other dangerous item(s) or object(s) on City property (including in City vehicles).

Early signs for potential workplace violence include but are not limited to bullying, inappropriate reactions to situations or employees, insubordination, mental health issues or other actions. Early signs of a potential victim of workplace violence include attendance issues, depression, poor work quality, apathy, withdrawal, or other significant changes in behavior. Any situations where you see any of these potential signs should be reported to the employee's supervisor or human resources.

## B. Training

The City will provide opportunities for City employees to be trained in the risk factors associated with workplace violence and the proper techniques for handling emergency situations in order to minimize the risks of violent incidents occurring in the workplace.

## C. Discipline

City employees who violate this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Employees also may be subject to possible civil and criminal action. Any disciplinary action will be taken pursuant to the City Central Work Rules, Civil Service Commission Rules and Regulations, applicable existing collective bargaining agreement, all applicable Memoranda of Understanding, and/or applicable State and Federal laws.

## D. Prohibition Against Retaliation

This policy prohibits retaliation against any employee who brings a good faith complaint of violent or intimidating behavior or who helps in investigating such complaints: the employee will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, nor discriminated against or discharged because of the complaint.

## **II. REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Each City employee and every person on City property is highly encouraged to report all incidents of workplace violence. After an incidence of workplace violence, the department/division human resources office should contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 645-6894. EAP will coordinate all crisis response activities.

- A. Any individual who believes that he or she is or has been subjected to or has witnessed workplace violence as defined above should report the incident to a human resources representative in their division or department on an **Incident/Occurrence of Workplace Violence form** within two (2) work days of the incident or as soon as possible.
  1. City employees should forward a completed form to Human Resources within their department/division or designee.
  2. In cases where the reporting person is not a City employee, a report should be made to the Columbus Division of Police.
- B. Human Resources or designee will investigate each incident and report back to the employee at the conclusion of the investigation.
- C. Human Resources or designee will send a copy of the report to the Occupational Safety and Health Programs Division. The investigation and conclusions will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law.

The Occupational Health and Safety Program routinely shall prepare Safety and Health Programs Division reports and will analyze aggregate data to identify emerging trends, patterns, and areas of high vulnerability; and help determine ways to reduce or eliminate the risks.